

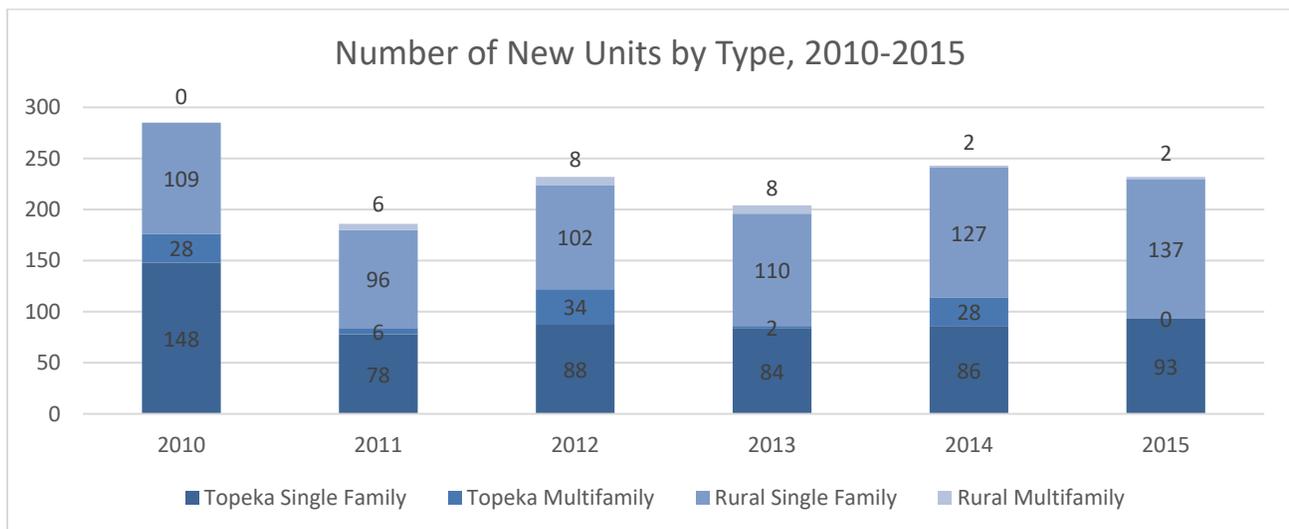
## Where has housing development occurred?

Since 1970, Shawnee County grew by 27,200 dwelling units at a rate of over 150 percent, despite population growth of 115 percent. Nearly half of the county’s housing development occurred during the 1970s with about 12,500 new units added. Development declined in the 1980s but has steadily increased since then. However, it has never reached its former levels of development.

Total Housing Units, 1970-2010							
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	'70-'10 Change	'70-'10 Annual Average % Change
City of Topeka	43,700	50,371	54,664	56,435	59,582	+15,882	0.9%
Tecumseh, Soldier, and Mission TWPs	3,906	7,280	8,924	10,793	12,190	+8,284	5.3%
Other TWPs	4,334	6,795	5,403	6,540	7,368	+3,034	1.8%
Shawnee County	51,940	64,446	68,991	73,768	79,140	+27,200	1.3%
<i>Change</i>	+12,506	+4,545	+4,777	+5,372			

Source: Census

Topeka absorbed 58 percent of the county’s housing development, but decreased as a proportion of the county’s housing stock from 84 percent in 1970 to 75 percent in 2010. Meanwhile, Mission, Soldier, and Tecumseh Townships absorbed another 30 percent of housing units. The remaining growth occurred in the county’s other townships and cities. Topeka tends to have smaller household sizes than the rest of the county.



Source: Census Building Permit Database

Since 2010, housing construction has slowed to a more gradual pace. From 2010 to 2015, some 1,382 new housing units were constructed in the county, of which just over half were built outside of Topeka. More than 90 percent of new homes are single family, a number that’s closer to 96 percent in the county. Most multifamily units were constructed in Topeka. These rates of development are slower than prior to the housing crash.

Findings & Conclusions:

1. Since 1970, Shawnee County has added 27,200 new dwelling units. The rate of growth outpaced the growth rate of the population, signaling declining household sizes.
2. Over the past 40 years, housing development outside of Topeka occurred at rates faster than occurred within Topeka, causing Topeka to lose its share of the county’s housing stock.
3. Most housing outside Topeka were developed in Mission, Soldier, and Tecumseh Townships near Topeka.
4. Home development has slowed since 2010. Most new homes being constructed are single family.

## How are housing trends changing?

Since 1970, the proportion of owner- to renter-occupied units has remained near a 2:1 ratio. Over this period, most of the county saw the proportion of renter-occupied households decline while Topeka moved from 37 percent renter-occupied in 1970 to 42 percent in 2010. Overall, Topeka contains more than 90 percent of the county’s rental stock. Consequently, Topeka is the primary reason the county maintained its total 2:1 owner-to-renter ratio. More recently, renter occupancy has increased.

Shawnee County								
	2000		2010		Change 2000-2010	2015		Change 2000-2015
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
Total Occupied	68,920	93.4%	72,600	91.7%	3,680	71,368	89.9%	2,448
<i>Owner-Occupied</i>	46,483	67.4%	47,715	65.7%	1,232	45,873	64.3%	-610
<i>Renter-Occupied</i>	22,437	32.6%	24,885	34.3%	2,448	25,495	35.7%	3,058
Total Vacant	4,848	6.6%	6,540	8.3%	1,692	8,057	10.1%	3,209
Total Units	73,768	100.0%	79,140	100.0%	5,372	79,425	100.0%	5,657

Source: 2000 & 2010 Census, 2015 5-Year American Community Survey

As new housing developed faster than population growth, the vacancy rate increased. In 1970, the county’s vacancy rate was 3.8 percent, below the 5 percent standard used to indicate a healthy market. After the housing boom, vacancy increased to 8.7 percent, after which it declined through 2000. The recession caused it to jump to 8.3 percent in 2010. Again, Topeka seems largely to drive this trend with a vacancy of 9.5 percent compared to the remainder of the county which had a 2010 vacancy of 4.6 percent.

Findings & Conclusions:

1. Within the County, the ratio of owner-occupied to renter-occupied units remained close to 2:1 since 1970. This is a relatively common ratio. Since 2000, the percentage of rentals increased due to new rental properties. Topeka has a disproportionate number of the county’s rentals.
2. Vacancy rates increased since 1970 with nearly 6,540 vacant homes as of 2010. Comparing 2010 vacancy rates, Topeka’s were 9.5% compared to the balance of the county at 4.6%. This indicates a stronger housing market outside of Topeka.

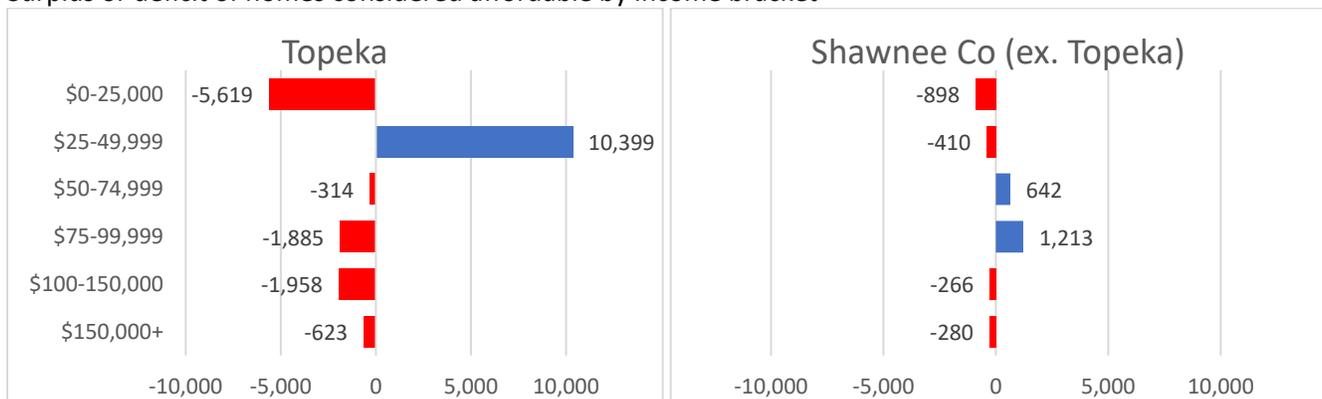
## How expensive is housing?

To determine whether housing is too expensive, housing costs must be compared against household incomes. In 2015, Shawnee County had a value to income ratio of 2.43 with a median home value of \$122,200 and median household income of \$50,378. This is generally considered an affordable, self-sustaining housing market with adequate value to support market rate new construction. If the ratio is under 2.0 or over 3.0, it indicates that homes are either undervalued relative to income or have affordability issues, respectively. For comparison, Kansas’s ratio is 2.53 with a median home value of \$132,000 and a median income of \$52,205.

Gaps in the housing market can be found by comparing the number of homes affordable to income cohorts. In Shawnee County, there is a deficit of homes affordable to households making under \$25,000 per year, about 6,500 less than is necessary given the county’s income characteristics. There are also deficits in housing for those making over \$75,000. Currently, gaps are filled by homes which are affordable to those making between \$25,000-50,000, suggesting that low income individuals are living in unaffordable housing, while higher income individuals are often living in housing lower than what they could afford.

### Housing Affordability Analysis

Surplus or deficit of homes considered affordable by income bracket



Source: RDG Planning & Design

Topeka drives the high demand for lower income housing, but the County outside Topeka still shows deficits for those making less than \$50,000 or over \$100,000. Overall, the County’s housing stock better matches its resident’s income. These characteristics suggest opportunity to develop some homes affordable to those making below \$50,000 in the county near Topeka, likely in areas to be annexed, to better provide public services. In addition, the county should encourage more homes valued over \$200,000 to allow household movement and the filtration of the housing stock. This permits mobility in the market as affordable homes become available.

### Findings & Conclusions:

1. Shawnee County’s housing market is generally appropriate given its income with a median value to income ratio lower than that of the State. Topeka’s lower home values tend to drive down the ratio.
2. Given the county’s income distribution, there is a deficit in affordable housing for lower and higher income households. These gaps are filled by a surplus of homes affordable to households making between \$25,000-50,000.

3. Outside of Topeka, the county has enough housing for households making \$50,000 to \$100,000, but is lacking homes above and below that. This suggests the county should focus on affordable options and higher end homes. However, the county's housing stock better matches its incomes when not accounting for Topeka.

## What should we expect?

Shawnee County is expected to reach a population of more than 192,500 by 2040. Accounting for vacancies, population per household, and the replacement of some units, about 5,700 new units or about 230 units per year will be needed to accommodate this growth. Of this, 1,200 is expected to occur in Topeka at urban densities, 3,100 is expected in the Urban Growth Area (UGA) at suburban densities, and the remaining 1,400 will occur in the rest of the county at a range of densities. Development in the UGA will initially be constructed in unincorporated county, but will be annexed when it receives full city services.

Most development is expected to occur near Topeka in areas capable of supporting developments with more urban services, such as public sewer. Neighborhoods can occur around focal points like schools, and commercial uses should be within reasonable distances. In the north, this includes areas around US-75 or near Seaman High School where access to sewer could allow denser development close to amenities. Other sites that could be developed at suburban densities include near Washburn Rural High School, where new homes could blend with existing ones to create new neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, exurban homes could be developed in areas no longer suited for agricultural, while other clusters of homes could be added to unincorporated communities. Finally, rural homesteads would be produced in areas to support Shawnee County agriculture. Developing in this way produces regular expectations as to the densities, locations, and types of growth anticipated for areas of the county. It would also create reasonable predictability for infrastructure expansion and the availabilities of different levels of service. However, areas unsuitable for development should be preserved as open space.



*The county already has some homes at suburban densities*



*Other areas of the county would remain rural*

### Findings & Conclusions:

1. Shawnee County should expect 5,700 new units by 2040. This requires about 230 new homes per year.
2. 75 percent of these homes will be constructed in Topeka or within Topeka's growth area. This leaves over 1,400 units for the remainder of the county.
3. Most development is expected to occur near Topeka, following past trends. Areas expected to support higher densities are those with access to sewer, including in Soldier and Mission Townships.
4. The rest of the development will include exurban, village, and rural development.

## Goals and Policy Recommendations

### Goals:

- Encourage adequate development to allow for the growth of Shawnee County.
- Ensure adequate methods of construction and development to protect the health, safety, and welfare of county residents.
- Guide development to areas suitable for that style of development with appropriate densities to support public services, including urban, suburban, exurban, rural, and village development types.
- Develop a range of housing options, especially those that are affordable for low income and those that cater to higher income households.
- Use existing focal points such as schools, parks, or commercial areas to create neighborhoods with amenities that will promote a high quality of life.
- Preserve areas unsuitable for residential development for parks or open space.

### Policy Recommendations:

- Work with developers to identify ways to streamline the development process while maintaining adequate oversight of the development process.
- Ensure adequate enforcement of the building code to protect the health, safety, and welfare of county residents.
- Update the zoning code to better reflect the current development pattern of the county and to guide urban, suburban, exurban, rural, and village development to appropriate locations.
- Work with developers to identify barriers to housing development in price ranges that are currently lacking in the county and determine methods that can help overcome those barriers.
- Set expectations for new residents to understand what service levels they may expect moving to different areas of the county.
- Update the development code (zoning and subdivision ordinances) to encourage neighborhood-oriented development in suburban areas, possibly through density incentives to help offset those costs
- Identify grant opportunities for housing development that would help fill needs within Shawnee County
- Update the zoning code to preserve areas unsuitable for residential development, including prime farmland, floodplains, and other natural areas.
- Work with residential developers to develop trails, parks, and other amenities for development.
- Educate land owners about how their land can be developed and streamline processes for landowners to do so themselves.